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A
Chopin Nocturne
and
Other Sketches

Two hundred copies privately
printed for the author
November, 1900

A Chopin Nocturne and Other Sketches

by Fannie Kimball Reed

*Those that come to see
Only a show or two, and so agree
The play may pass.— Henry viii*



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Prologue

It was holiday time, and in a room on the top floor of a German pension three girls had just finished having their tea. They were three musicians who, having little money and less time, had decided to remain in Leipsic and keep up the routine of their work. The walls of the room were covered with casts and photographs; on a chair was a violin, and a concert piano littered with music stood by a window looking down into an open court.

This court was the center of a huge stone block, and from the window one might witness those dramas common to the back doors of a neighborhood, and not devoid of that grotesque humor with which the commonplace is sometimes colored.

At the end of the room, opposite the window, two of the girls were lounging on a couch that did duty for a bed by night, now gay

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with rugs and cushions. One of them still held her violin bow in her hand as she leaned against the shoulder of the other, whose dark eyes shone beneath her half-lowered eyelids; she was a singer studying Wagnerian roles under a famous master. A small girl half leaning on the keyboard, was picking out with veiled sweetness a nocturne of Chopin. As the monochromatic tones fell from her delicate fingers they seemed scarcely to penetrate the gathering dusk; they shone palely through it like crescent moons.

"Chopin in this half-light makes me think of the dusk of Italy, I don't know why," said the violinist, arranging a pillow under her head.

The girl at the piano looked over her shoulder. "Interpret for me."

She rose on her elbow. "Very well, but give me a little time."

"You shall have two measures of it."

The dark girl raised slowly her sleepy eyelids. "Remember the dusk of Italy," she said.

There was silence for a little, and then the girl began speaking in a soft monotonous voice.

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The monologue seemed to diffuse itself into the tones of the piano, which shone through the dusk like stars or the pale light of the young moon.

* * *

We three went into the olive woods to pick violets. We crouched close to the earth as the peasants do, and in the dusky light we might have been those toilers, who getting their all from the earth, in the end come to bear a strange and terrible resemblance to it. Above us were the twisted and black columns of those antique trees, some a thousand years old. Over their heads they threw, in the *abandon* of an ever returning youth, the mist-like drapery of their leaves; the subtle half-color of moonlight, it floated there, like an almost impalpable powder blown into the drenched air.

The ground was strewn with violets, with scarlet anemones, and white and yellow jonquils. In the west the sun burned low; and as its last light fell on the hedge of orange trees, their fruit turned slowly to flame.

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But what enchanted the eye, sweet as first love and with as swift feet, was a row of little peach and almond trees crowned with wreaths of blossoms. Behind the wall they stood, children of the spring. For a moment the eye drank their beauty, but in that cup was the distillation of a longing sadness.

The shadows crept along the wall. We heard the sound of the sea, then it seemed to die away. A child's voice rang out, then all was still again. The sun went lower, it began to darken.

There was a half vanishing of the wood into the dusk, but still the little trees stood out, their blossoms smiling ever with their sweet lips; and as we crouched there on the ground we felt the violets slipping from our loosed fingers.

Silent as sleep lay the garden where stood the young trees whose blossoms smiled ever with sweet lips; sad and sweet like first love. And the enchantment was this—that the heart would stay their swift passing, but could not, and in the sadness of hopeless longing their beauty was born. So said one of us, but she was an Italian.

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A woman came down the narrow lane between the walls; she hushed in a soft voice the child she carried in her arms. Suddenly a bell rang out; it was the Angelus. We still crouched on the ground, our eyes turned upward. Someone murmured, *Jesu Christi*. But still I saw with longing sadness only the little trees whose blossoms trembled in the light wind.

* * *

The girl at the piano struck the final minor chord. "It's Chopin, but not Italy. You have joined the decadents."

"Too much work," the girl replied languidly. "Work, always the gray of work; life has no scarlet."

"The world's outside and 'tis summer," said the singer, looking out of the window where the Pleiades shone above the roofs.

"But how can we go away; for one thing we must leave our friend next door who plays a French horn all day with the aspiration of belonging to the Gewandhaus orchestra, but doomed in the end—such is one of the little

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ironies of this life — to the obscurity of a village band."

"Why trouble about him — he loves his destiny and his horn." The pianist leaned both elbows on the keyboard. "Give me leave, and like Puck, I'll put a girdle around the world in forty minutes."

"We all know you can talk," said the singer; "but can you be stopped, there's the rub?"

"For a reasonable amount I can be," sighed the pianist, getting up to light the candles.

The violinist went over to a desk and opened a drawer. "I know a girl who made many a journey, who saw the world, its domes and towers, and men and women, as on a painted screen; and heard too its movements, its appassionatas and adagios."

The pianist smiled. "I move she be heard. Why should silence monopolize her? If she pipes gayly, I, for one, will dance."

The singer looked over the shoulder of the violinist. "It looks interesting enough," she said, turning over some yellowed sheets of manuscript. "I move she be heard."

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But the girl shook her head. "It's too late. See—the stars are shining above the roofs! Her *wanderjahr* was done long since. Tomorrow when the sun is there"—she pointed just above the flying figures on the roof of the conservatoire—"we will go with her outside, into the world."



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Grimma

Were you ever in Grimma? There is nothing there to see and we saw it in half a day—nothing but the cloister from which the nun Katherine Van Bora escaped to marry Luther. Going over on the train William recited to me the picturesque legends which have been told of this escape. We are polite and call them legends, otherwise the reputation of those days for veracity might suffer.

There is a story that Luther fell in love with a letter she wrote him and demanded her release to marry her; and there is an account of her and nine other nuns being smuggled in beer-casks and driven at a mad pace to the castle of the elector, somebody or other, I have forgotten whom now—and it does not much matter as by this time he has probably forgotten the incident himself.

Grimma has its public gardens, old and

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quaint, from which reach out long avenues of trees whose branches grow so low on their moss-covered trunks that the roadways and walks beneath seem to sleep in perpetual twilight.

There are great sleepy swans floating on the stagnant ponds and the place looks as though it had been enchanted five hundred years before. But where are the knights and ladies who used to whisper beneath these same trees?

Instead, we saw swaggering down the avenue a military band in gay hussar uniform—the plumes on their red shakos nodding as they came along with cavalier tread. The blue and silver of their uniform gave the necessary dash and splash of color to the picture; and what a background it was, that old sleeping avenue! One could imagine what a crack regiment must be to a small place like Grimma. We asked if there was to be music that evening and they answered no, but that they played outside while the officers had supper. Such is the life of an officer in Germany.

Grimma lies by the Mulde, a stately river

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with beautiful wooded hills rising on both sides of it. Along the base of these hills we walked for a mile and a half till we came upon a yellow signboard with an arrow pointing to where the cloister hides itself in vines and foliage.

“The cloister,” one says; but there is nothing left but stone walls with great arches, once doors and windows, through which on this summer day butterflies were flying. It was pastorally still; even the shouts of some small boys rioting near by in a mud-puddle could not disturb the peaceful silence. Who would connect this scene with the square, bull-necked Luther, with the terrible struggles of the Reformation? One could scarcely think, without a sigh, of the beautiful Katherine and her sister nuns stealing from the twilight of this sheltered place, into a storm-beaten world, to find there their destinies in men battling against the sacred customs of their religion.

They laid violent hands, those old Reformers, on the shrines of beauty, and sometimes as one thinks of the German preachers droning away in their box-like pulpits, one wonders

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if it were worth the spent blood and trouble.

William drew the sign of the cross on the graveled walk. "When you go to Padua, go and hear mass in the old cathedral there. Once in the night I heard sung there the mass for the dead. On the high altar twinkled in the dusk the ornaments of gold and silver, and as the choirboys chanted with their violin voices, the violet smoke of the incense rose in clouds, the flames of the candles flickered like the souls of the dead and of those who have come for them, and in the swinging lamps smouldered the scarlet and purple fire, like the tongues of love and passion.

"How subtle are the thoughts which, through this masque of beauty, steal for a moment with the beloved dead into the eternal shadow. And yet," said William, looking at the ruined walls of the cloister, "Italy sleeps. When you go to Eisenach you will see in a room in the Wartburg a blotch on the wall where Luther once fired his ink-bottle at the devil, and hit him, too, I'll wager. So Germany swings the balance over Italy. Well, let us go back to the town."

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We wandered back, and if we belonged anywhere, it was in the sixteenth century; but in the market-square we found again the nineteenth, for it was market-day in Grimma, and buying and selling were going on briskly. The market-place was crowded with booths filled with vegetables, flowers, and fruit; and the air sang with the mingled cackling and screaming of poultry and old women.

Your flower-girl, who is usually sixty or seventy years old, bent half double, with a face like a withered turnip, is a subject difficult to romance over. She needs to be in perspective and a good deal of it; but the goose-girl, or goose-boy, or goose-human, whatever he be, rises to the pitch and fulfils expectancy every time.

The hissing, fluttering flock are driven hither and yon, by, let us say, the goose-girl, who in the manipulations of a long whip contrives to fall into picturesque poses.

See her now, hands on hips, chin in the air.

"Will you have a goose, ladies and gentlemen? Step up now and choose your goose and let the goose-girl show you a thing or two."

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You point to the largest of the flock, a gray old goose with a Schopenhauer cast of countenance.

Now the goose-girl throws out like a flash her long whip, the lash curls about the neck of the goose philosopher, and in a second he is pulled to your feet; and if your goose is not cooked he is on the way to it.

We turned from the pictures of the marketplace to wander through the narrow streets of the old town; by a famous school for boys, by the ruins of the castle where we watched the sun setting behind the hills; its light fell on the great curved stone gables and long narrow walled entrance with its crumbling pillars capped with gigantic balls of stone. Over the red sandstone bridge which spans the Mulde we wandered on, looking down on those great arches begun over two hundred years ago.

The sunset falls on castle walls.

As I listened to the current of the river, in my mind's eye passed what quaint processions over this old bridge! Bevvies of pink-cheeked Saxon girls in wooden shoes and low-necked

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bodices, soldiers in gay uniforms with clanking swords, crowds of peasants, red-capped and rough-booted, bearing fuel, fruit, and vegetables to the portly burghers of the town.

How the wheel and piston of your modern iron bridge beat on the ear, but soft as a dream passes through the mind this procession of olden days—like the figures on a Greek vase which have had perish away their time and place, and still live on, and will, so long as the heart loves beauty.

* * *

We have supper in an old inn with a tiny court and passageways paved with stone worn by the coming and going of many long years. The Golden Lion they call it, and here they serve you with wild strawberries with the flavor of the wood in them, and a champagne with as many sparkles as the paraphrases of Anacreon.

Over these we linger as the shadows thicken on the deserted square and on the old steep-roofed houses with their peering dormer windows.

How still it is!

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The only sign of life is a little yellow dog whose legs work in a ridiculous manner to carry him across the street to bark at a white cat sleeping peacefully under a door-knocker at least three hundred years old.

And that old *Rathskeller* across the way, built in 1400, how many generations of yellow dogs has it seen and heard bark, and then subside into dust!

Over there where that blur of pale light shows on the horizon's edge, there is a great city where men and women strain and sweat in the rush of life, but who could hurry under the gables of these old houses?

Like a stone image of that old Rameses of Egypt who, with his mysterious smile, mocks the effervescent bubbles of the flying years, they make one no more than a pinch of dust — a pinch of dust tousled by every whiffet of a scolding wind.

At just this point in my musing, an obsequious waiter pushes his fiercely pointed mustache into the room. The carriage waits to take us to the station.

"Is my hat on straight?" I question

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William, looking into his sad eyes. Is it the mystery of life or is it the champagne? We lift high our glasses and clash their rims together. "To Time—Time, who like a big-bellied peasant drinks us down, glorious and ignoble together, like a brew of indifferent beer."

In a moment we are in the carriage. The moon is over my right shoulder and behind us rises the castle roof against the evening sky.

"I've discovered something," William says suddenly, leaning toward me and gesturing behind the back of the innocent cabman. "It's true about Katherine Van Bora," he goes on, nodding mysteriously.

"What's true?" I query. "Why the legends about her escape," he whispers. "Well, I never doubted it." "Yes, it's true," he muses.

"Let me see, it was some time in 1500. Well, this is the identical cab that carried her off." I peer over the rickety wheels, "It does look rather ancient."

"And the very horse," he says enthusiastically.

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“There seems no doubt about the horse; it's ribs are of a style of architecture dating back to the Gothic of the fifteenth century.”

When we drive up at a funereal pace in front of the station the dusk hides the long street leading into the town; the crescent moon has risen higher in the pale sky, and over there where the castle roof shows dim in the dusk, we hear faint and low the horns of the regiment band.



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A Day in the Harz Mountains

In this air one sleeps like the dead, but the wind out of the pine forest blew across my face and I awakened. The barn is built on to the end of the house, and I heard the horse stamping, the hens cackling, and knew I should soon get my breakfast, for these German hens lay fresh eggs for my breakfast every morning!

A little later Frau John came tapping at my door with my breakfast of omelette and cherries. Old, white-haired Frau John, whose children all sleep in the graveyard on the hill, and who never fails to present me at breakfast a nosegay of roses and mignonette.

"Today is a good day to make the ascent," said old Frau John, speaking of the Brocken. "'Tis clear, and you can't count on that every day. The Brocken is a soul with more tears than smiles." So it was settled.

We drive away in the early morning, passing

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an old girl yoked to her wooden pails. *Tag*, calls she in her deep voice. Her stockingless feet are thrust into heelless slippers; there is nothing superfluous about her even in clothes. Nature's conditions have peeled her down till there is not much left but kernel, and if this is a little bitter, it is not unwholesome. At first she seemed to me but a type of toil, but afterward she grew on me and I saw in her the shadow of a great force—the ascetic holding the balance against the world's sensualism.

“Adieu,” I call to her as she swings by, her wooden pails dangling at her sides. *Glück*, she shouts back, without turning her head a hairbreadth to stare after me.

Five hours' drive from the base to the brow of the Brocken, through beech wood and pine wood, where mountain streams leap from rock to rock, purple in the shadow, but silver and gold where they swirl in the open, and then up a steep rock-strewn ascent, and we are on the summit of the Brocken.

Here on this airy perch we find ourselves isolated from the earth by a mist rising from

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the plain beneath. The view is gone; there is nothing to be done but to take ourselves into the Brocken café and persuade ourselves we have driven up here for a glass of beer. Inside two or three hundred tourists are bent on the same persuasion. Near us a party of students with wreaths of leaves and wild flowers on their hats, hum softly *Verlassen, verlassen*, staring at us with those transcendental German eyes in which poetic feeling and love of beer mingle together. The air is blue with the smoke from the men's cigars; figures loom hazily through it like phantoms struggling in the mists. It is Faust's Walpurgis night over again, and we hurry out, view with interest the hole in the ground where the devil is said to have sat down rather hard, and start on the homeward drive which takes us less than two hours.

It has cleared when we drive into Ilsenberg, and the sun is going down behind the mountains against whose misty slopes shine warmly the clustering red-tiled roofs of the houses. A pleasant home-coming it is! On the long street the light flickers like a candle flame in

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the wind and then goes out. Down the road comes to meet us the shepherd with his flock and the sociable black-and-tan sheep dog, and farther on we greet the hay-women coming home in the twilight — bluff old spirits in short skirts, shapeless sacques, and bare legs, their heads bound up in red and yellow scarfs. The best of it is, they have such a devil-may-care air; a manner half satirical, half roystering camaraderie. It would seem that these old cronies having lived out with wind and weather and done a man's work and woman's too on this old earth, had learned a thing or two. I would give a good deal for the philosophy got by sixty or seventy years' hay-raking.

At supper when I tell Frau John of our lack of success, she shakes her head. "Ah! that Brocken, 'tis a tricky soul with more tears than smiles!"

* * *

There is a little garden across the street from where I live, full of rose trees tied to poles topped with gilt and silver balls.

At night the moon rises slowly over the

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mountain and lights the village, the country road, and the pool in front of the hotel Forellen, which reflects in its depths the trembling lights, and the rows of little clipt locust trees growing at its edge.

Then it moves over the little garden where it shines down with soft light. Half asleep I lie in my bed, hearing, as in dreams, a girl's thin voice singing to the tinkling notes of an old piano. Suddenly I tremblingly start up. What was that? It was a voice which sang like the moving darkness of the pine trees —

*Ich stand in dunkeln träumen.**

With sobbing breath I strive to utter the familiar words.

A face starts out of the darkness, the eyes look into mine — those dark unfathomable eyes. I fall back on my pillow and press my hand over my heart, which seems falling to pieces.

* From Heine's Poem "Her Portrait" —

I stand in darkest dreaming,
And gaze her face upon,
And on the beloved features
The life begins to dawn.

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And still the voice rises from the little garden,
where I seem to hear the rose leaves falling
softly, softly on the grass.

*Und ach, ich kann es nicht glauben,
Dass ich dich verloren hab'.*

And round her lips is growing
A wondrous, wondrous smile,
And as through tears of longing
Sparkle her eyes the while.

And my tears are flowing
My cheeks forever down,
And oh — I cannot believe it,
My darling, that thou art gone!

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Hildesheim—Beneath the Gables of Olden Houses

"Let me for once in my life do a place in American style," I thought to myself, as I sent one porter after a cabman and another after a guide. And with these two natives I did Hildesheim in four hours.

It is true I was sick all the next day and at times could not remember whether I had been in Hildesheim or not, but I had the satisfaction of knowing that the Browns could never throw up to me again their feat of having done Florence while they waited over one train.

When I had recovered enough to look over my mail, I thought the matter over, and decided that Hildesheim was as good a place as any, and so I stayed on a week longer.

But after all it was those glimpses of the old place caught on the fly, that gave to the

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Hildesheim of memory its peculiar charm, like the city of a dream.

Glimpses of old houses with bands of carving, vivid with color, till one could imagine a mantle of rich embroidery had been hung there, streets garlanded with ropes of evergreen and bedizened with flags, for it was fete day, with here and there the red patch of a house-wall showing through the forest of little birch boughs which stood by every door, between every window, and hung from the eaves. What towers and old churches, and in the midst of all and over all, my guide and the driver standing up in the carriage, talking at once, while a procession of small boys followed gayly behind.

At the first church there was the dearest old verger, who came clattering across the churchyard with the great iron keys in his hand. He chippered away with his two lone teeth and made me promise to come again if I stayed over, and I promised to do so if I lived. The next morning I hurried around to that church early and the faithless old one had gone off to the fete. Such is man, early or late, they are all the same.

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He showed me pillars eight hundred years old, which some Americans have taken casts of, which are now in the Boston Museum. Of course this made us brothers on the spot, and so when he confided to me that he had been showing the church to visitors for thirty years I said nothing, but I was skeptical; he looked more to me as though he had been showing it for three hundred years.

In the crypt of this old church are the bones of Bishop Bernward, its famous founder, but though I begged for that crypt he shook his head and the two lone teeth rattled sadly. "He was so desolate that he could not show the crypt to the gracious lady;" it belonged still to the Catholics, though the church had passed into the hands of the Protestants soon after the Reformation.

The more I thought about it, the more I longed for that crypt. What to me was the Roman ceiling, what the angel choir, whose lacework of marble could not conceal those angelic forms, their faintly-tinted wings like the half unfurled leaf of the crocus, their upturned faces like rose leaves? O, sweet! But I was

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always thinking of the crypt and the bones in it, and I recalled bitterly a crypt at Lyons, France, and how by saying a prayer there, we had been absolved, by the Pope, of our sins for three hundred days. And the life afterwards, ah! the life afterwards, and those three hundred days were past and gone. Nights in Florence when through the arches of Ponte Vecchio we talked with the east and west, or in the dusk of early morning hurrying home from some rout, saw the dawn touch to flame the marble of Angelo's David, till rising out of the shadow it seemed to spring from its pedestal into the air.

Days and nights of Venice, when we jostled Greek, Christian, and Jew on the Rialto, buying their thick-skinned dates; and a little beyond, the "Golden House" rose from the water like a jeweled peacock's feather; and beneath the shadow of the blue domes of San Marco the pigeons fluttered and cooed, as the corn was scattered on the pavement.

Spring and summer days in Germany, *Ach Gott*, passed and gone, when we sat on the iron balcony high above the street, and saw the

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mist rising from the river, and talked Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. Or at night, where the river flowed through the wood, heard the nightingale calling to her love; and the moonlight fell there soft as snow, save where the dark branches of the trees moved between.

You will find at the end of the wood a little café where the German *Frauen* and *Herren* drink their beer, while the children tumble under the tables, the light from the coal-oil lamp falling on their ruddy faces and flaxen hair and the blue and gray beer-mugs on the wall.

There is a man with a waxed mustache who plays on an old piano *Verlassen, verlassen*, and in his dark eyes, as I lean on the little round table, I see the Orient; the great sweep of the Arabian desert lies there before me, smiling with its mystical white smile, the wind out of the starry sky is in my face, and we are flying. "And will the gracious lady see the altar built into the church in 'One Thousand,' and will the gracious lady see the carved Madonna, Saint Joseph, Saint John, and the iron candlesticks?"

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To all of this I shook my head sadly, pressed a coin into the hand of the ancient verger, and joined my guide, who for the moment had gone out of the guide business and reposed against the doorpost of a café near by, discussing a glass of beer with the driver.

These two natives impressed me with awe by their manner of anticipating their wages. At every stopping-place they "took beer," arranging a little loan with me on the strength of prospective fees—that friendly we had become; I never met with two gentlemen of larger imagination; there may have been cafés in Hildesheim where we did not take beer, but I do not believe it.

We drove to the Domhof which the guide-book states to be the birthplace of Hildesheim. This guide-book, by the way, written in English by a German, contains some jewels which reconciles one to the limits of one's own speech. One would fain hear such forever.

Speaking of the "Guild Hall of the Butchers," the poetic one writes: "The viewer leaves but hart this house who stands matchless." There a picture, and in a guide-book,

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and without preparation, before one has become what one might call "exposed" to this striking style, he proclaims in speaking of the restoration of a building. "It must be praised that they are harty about to conserve this bright ornament to old Hildesheim and to save it to the furtherest times." And again he speaks in that delicious way of his, of a wind mill "that as an ornament to the country is conserved to the town."

Should you travel many a day and find at the end the Domhof square towers and peaked gables waiting you, you would swear it had been a short shrift for so quaint a shrine.

Here in the consecrated inner Domhof is the one-thousand-year-old rose bush which has an authentic history of two hundred years. When one remembers some of the legends of Germany this, in itself, is a remarkable fact.

But it is only unpoetic scientists who throw those two hundred years in your face; the real lover of that rose bush will tell you that about the year 800, Ludwig hunting in the forests of Saxony, lost his way, and when

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the night fell he hung his crucifix on a wild rose bush and lay down to sleep. There in a dream the Holy Virgin Maria appeared unto him, and in commemoration of this visit of the Virgin, by the rose bush, the Domhof sprang up; and this is the same rose tree, and inside in the Domhof treasure-trove is that same crucifix. Who would not believe this quaint legend against a time-serving botanist?

A wealth of adornment, Gothic and Italian Renaissance, carven tomb, sculptured madonna, font and carven screen, gilt and bronze hanging lamps, jeweled reliquaries—all these delicately wrought gifts the workers of a past time have bequeathed to linger here in the shadow of the Domhof rooftree.

And how they wrought, those old artisans, beneath the carven gables of Hildesheim! And they are dust now, and yet as one lingers here in the dusk, dreaming, out of their graves they seem to reach their long fingers to hold one captive, while through the aisles steals like incense the faint odor of old shrouds, where have fallen rose leaves crumbling with the mortal dust, or scent of autumn herbs, whose

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spice one treads out, trampling unknowingly on a grave hid in the long grass.

Through a low archway we followed the verger into the courtyard where the one-thousand-year-old rose bush shows its great branches on the walls.

Here are the cloisters surrounded by a beautiful arcade, with delicately carved Roman archways; within is the graveyard whose low crosses are covered with moss. How peaceful sleeps moonlight and sunlight on those myrtle-covered graves! and softly it falls too, through the low archways on the stone pavements, where long ago priest and monk murmured their prayers, with a little sniff for the fragrant roses in the grass below, or mayhap a peep at the stars, or a shivering glance at the shadows of the crosses on the path beneath; and following the footsteps of the old monks, we lingered by the door of the Anna Kapelle, seeing through half-shut eyes its glittering crucifix and the dragon gargoyles springing out into the air above the graves in the grass.

We knelt on the stone floor; someone kept whispering, *Jesu Christi, Jesu Christi*, and the

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light fell through the stained-glass windows on the faded altar cloth, and outside the pigeons cooed and plumed themselves on the red-tiled roofs.

Who would not linger in such a place? But the world of Hildesheim waited outside, and so away we drove, through old archways, down narrow streets scarcely wide enough for our carriage, by old carven houses over whose doorways was written many a name famous in Hildesheim history. Ah! those houses, tiny, some of them, and carven and stained, with scroll and wreath and arabesque, and knight and lady and child, all dreadfully fat—the medieval German was fat, I am convinced of it.

It made one quite mad to see people in modern clothes wandering beneath those gables; only Faust and Mephisto should have been there, the light slanting on Mephisto's thin brown cheek and on the scarlet feather in his cap.

Through those low doors and archways one creeps into the heart of medieval Germany; the birch boughs by door and window are the

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survival of a medieval custom making the old buildings keep festival in riotous hilarity. So it is the world over, till to the subtle mind there is no youth nor age; life is seen in different stages of festival, labor or quiescence, that is all.

* * *

At the hospital, where there is a maiden who does not understand German even when it is spoken in Mr. Otto's best manner (such is the stupidity of the natives in not understanding their own language), I dismissed my guide and driver, and peering through doorways into workshop and wine-cellar, I wandered back to the market-place.

Here I sat down to rest by an old fountain. Around this market-square are grouped some of the most picturesque houses in Germany — Knochenhauer, Amthaus, Wedekind, Rathaus, and all the rest.

As the dusk deepened, stealing away the richness of their ornamentation, but not the picturesqueness of their outlines against the sky, it seemed to me they leaned toward each

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other, whispering together. And the fountain, in voices no darkness could quench, called to me of old workers, dead and gone, who wrought with a sincere vigor which perpetuated even ugliness.

In the shadow of a doorway a soldier caught a bare-necked girl by the arm and kissed her warmly; she put up her plump hand over her laughing mouth. Ah! my doves, the shadows under the doorway of the haus Wedekind were not so deep as you dreamed.

* * *

Some night I would like to steal back there when all is still, save the trickle of the water in the basin of the fountain, and hear those old houses talk together.

Many a year have the old cronies stood shoulder to shoulder around the market-square, and strange stories they might tell of olden days and customs; of men and women dead and gone, their craft and cunning lingering on in faded ornaments, "like a tale that is told," or rather like an old picture all of whose tints time has mellowed. For us those

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days spell "romance." They had their guilds, their singing societies, their workers' clubs; in many a tiny workshop wrought not artisan but artist. And they loved, back there in the youth of that old place, for they had red blood in their veins; and they hated too, and fought and worked and renounced in tears no eyes saw.

Ah! you might hear a tale worth the telling and hearkening to.

* * *

As I went down the dusky street to my hotel, a sentence from the guide-book came into my mind.

"Everywhere and at all times in Hildesheim, the right noble fashion is kept; with that suits the liberality that is done in a high degree to all distressed."

Happy Hildesheim, so may it ever be, beneath the carven gables of thy rooftrees!



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On the Hills of Weimar

We slowly climbed the hill, the Russian lady and I. It was the fifth day of April and just four o'clock. A violet mist veiled the sun, and though the air was still the ground seemed to beat like a heart with life. No bird was visible, yet the air was full of bird trilling. It was as though the brown earth, turned over for the sowing, was singing.

Halfway up the hill five people were breaking the soil.

There was an old man who never straightened up; like those trees whose branches sometimes take root in the earth. He had on a ragged brown coat and below this hung a purple woolen shirt. Near him stood a small boy, who raised his hoe with a desultory movement, waving his head from side to side, as though his life had been drawn out of him and he was following with an inner gaze its movements through the air.

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A peasant woman with large hands and feet stood next to him, a yellow scarf bound over her head. The meek and patient pose of her whole body as she leaned on her hoe touched the heart. So Millet would have painted her.

Beyond her was a young couple, a man and a girl staring listlessly into the air with vague glances. She, like the boy, seemed to feel the vague wonder of something which had loosened itself out of her and escaped from the life of the soil into the air. The young man worked industriously; but he too seemed conscious of something of himself freed, but gone — whither? He looked from time to time at the girl as though in her might be found the answer, but she with her dull pathetic eyes stared still vaguely up into the sky. As we passed them the vivid color of their garments, the pose of their leaning figures was caught against the deep violet of the sky. They might have been a fresco of toil: beings born out of the earth and ever returning to it, bearing on their faces and bodies the signs of their brotherhood with it; the different angles of their bent figures expressing the different

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stages of the accomplishment of their destiny.

There were three children walking against the sky on the far side of the hill. They moved there like dark leaning figures cut out of cardboard. In the distance their stick-like legs and arms moved about with a curiously mechanical motion. We heard the softened murmur of their laughter, scarcely connecting it with those silhouettes on the distant horizon. That strange blotting out which distance does, had rubbed them into the earth and sky as a mere part of it. The landscape had drunk them up as though they were flies. We walked slowly over the brow of the hill, passing the fields ploughed up for the sowing. The brown dirt seemed to possess the five senses—it asked for the recognition of brotherhood.

* * *

And over all a deep quiet—the calm, the quiescence of the great mother before the birth of a new life from out her.

We were silent for a while, but as the shadows darkened we began speaking softly together. We talked of people who had lived

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with tragic simplicity the pure logic of their own natures; of developments in human affairs as simply true as the natural life out of doors; of Nietzsche, the philosopher, who now imbecile lived on the other side of the hill; of elemental natures whose fires no custom could quench, the sequences of whose catastrophes followed each other as irrevocably as the succession of the seasons; of the justification of the crimes of great revenges.

Our somber stories fitted the sadness of the gathering darkness. We turned toward the lights of the town with a feeling of relief.

Night covered the great hills, as the distance had drunk up the lonely ones toiling on their slopes.



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Jena

In my memory remains a picture of a group of girls shivering in the early dawn in an old garden. That garden is in Jena and there the shadowy trees, sighing as in some sad Gregorian chant, lament their lost poet, the too swift-passing Schiller.

Ten figures oblique against the wind, like the rigid outlines on an Egyptian frieze, stole down the dark streets — the German governess at the head with her umbrella, I in the middle, and the lover of the English governess at a respectful distance in the rear.

The sun had raised its disc above the edge of the hills, when we found ourselves in a narrow street before a group of old buildings. There once lived the early professors of the old university.

Ah! there were types! Old Mathias Flacias, who quarreled with a brother professor all his

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life long on theological questions. In church and out of church they hurled denunciations at each other; and their houses being separated by only a narrow passageway, they shouted across from their windows, affording to the simple folks about an edifying example of the influence on the human passions of a thorough searching of Holy Writ. Mathias's name was Fletz, which he had changed to the Latin as was customary in those days.

On one occasion his opponent,— whose name I have forgotten, he having gone down in history as the maker of a phrase, and that an opprobrious one, rather than as the discoverer of any law in theology,— leaning far out of his window, this learned man shook his fist in a manner that did full justice to his theological training, and bellowed out that his brother professor was *ein grober Fletz*—*grober* meaning uncouth and ruffianly; and to this day that name is tossed about Germany, a term of derision. All of which goes to show that those people who claim theological discussions have no real bearing on ordinary life, are without a proper knowledge of history. I

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think, nay I will wager, that Mathias and his brother professor were, deep down in their hearts, fond of each other. Let us hope they died on the same day, for think how lonely the one left would be. No voice bellowing across the street; no whacking and laying on of ecclesiastical knockdowns in the market-place while the wondering townspeople stood gaping open-mouthed at such a display of mental sinew; and looking down on them from his own adventurous day, clad in complete armor, stood the statue of the stout elector. In a very truculent attitude he stood, the open Bible in one hand and a long unsheathed sword in the other, as much as to say that the Christian precept of love to one another was the only true religion, which he had come into the world especially to enforce, and to enforce at the tip end of a very sharp sword, too.

I love those old days and their mighty, quarrelsome men. There was the stout elector, old Johann Freidrich. Fat as he was, Johann Freidrich had a most romantic time of it. At the battle of Muhlberg he was taken prisoner by Charles V. Though wounded he

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might have escaped had his horse been able to carry his immense weight. Ten weary years was he an exile from home, Lucas Cranich, the painter, accompanying him in exile, for he was his friend.

But the long years, as slow as rose and set the sun on lonely days and nights, passed away, and home comes the doughty knight, his wife and children coming out to meet him, and a tower is still standing on one of the hills where the meeting took place. I wonder what they said—not much, I imagine. He looked into her face on which years of waiting must have cut some anxious lines, and in that smile illumining the faded countenance was there not something heartbreaking?

Perhaps he noticed some detail of her dress, some little pains she had taken to still look fair in his dear eyes. And she, scanning over the beloved face, to draw from thence the consolation that the years had not bereft her of him, all tremulously read each little sign by which she made him still her own.

What could he do after all these years but fold her in his arms?

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Home came these two arm in arm, their children by their side.

Jena must have looked beautiful to Johann Freidrich's eyes. There below him the red-tiled roofs shone in the fading light, the old church with its great tower and shrined madonna. And there the river mirrored the setting sun as placid as though there were no meetings or partings on this earth; for you may sigh enough into it to put out a furnace fire, but you shall not darken its glassy smile. Your river has a disdain for men and affairs. It allows not itself to be disturbed. You may neighbor with a tree, plant your hill with a vineyard, and frolic with it at sunrise and in the purple evening, but your river keeps the antique repose of those gods who from Olympia deigned not to stoop to quarrel with the smiles and tears of men.

So lovely Jena in that soft light touched Johann Freidrich after years of separation with a power to fire his spirit, and he then and there vowed Jena a university, keeping his word, as I'll warrant he made other people keep theirs, from the way he takes hold of his sword.

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How full Jena is of memories! Its dark narrow streets seem like the naked bed of a river where has once run a stream calling from some lofty height.

Here Schiller wrote *Wallenstein*; here is the bare wooden house he lived in while he tried, on a starvation salary, to support a family and pay off debts accumulated while in school. And in the midst of his duties, as father, breadwinner, professor of history, and helper to his mother,—for he was ever a dutiful son,—he found time to write *Wallenstein*. It is this world pressure of poverty and work and trouble battling against us, that gives the human granite its scarlet and purple veinule—the royal colors of suffering.

* * *

The sun reached meridian, and on Jena's mediævally narrow streets and dark archways it shone down with hospitable warmth. The whole morning yawning in the face of the old streets, even as they told their story, we rose now to a momentary enthusiasm 'neath this

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epic of the sun and fastened our eyes on the heights above the town.

On one of those hills sang once the guns of Napoleon their song of death to the Prussians drawn up in the valley below. What a music calls from these fields of Europe! Nor has the last note sounded. One shall hear again those strange wild chords announcing the beginning of a colossal agony.

Even the old church has its storm epoch, for see—all the shrines hollowed from its outer walls are empty now, save one at the end which shrines still its snub-nosed madonna. With the peculiar Gothicky leer of the fifteenth century she looks down from her ancient perch on the passer-by.

Her companions,—I wonder if she misses them,—during one of those spasms of rage which took possession of the Protestants in the early days of the Reformation, went the way of many a good old saint of stone. When Luther heard of it he left the Wartburg, where he was translating the Bible, and hastening into Jena, dispersed the iconoclasts, and so our madonna was saved.

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Against the background of devil legends which sprang up in those days, when men battling against each other seemed less human than demon, is etched many times the bulk of Luther. He was a good figure, but this incident is like a jet of light in the face of the real man. Only your builder shall tear down. He knows what to spare to build into the new, what is rubbish and what building-stone; but for those empty shrines, 'twas a pity. One could not but furnish them anew with wall-eyed meaching saints standing stiffly there in their niches, while sun and rain and snow beat on Jena's streets, and lover and maid and soldier and artisan passed by, intent on the passion of their hour ere they returned to the dust which in the end these saints of stone, crumbling through the long years in their niches, mingled with at last.

* * *

To get to the height we passed the old clubhouse of the university. We had heard the story that the students always sat outside the doorway on summer days drinking their beer,

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and that they had not failed once in the last three hundred years in saluting out-of-town maidens with fervid love-songs.

It is true there was another way to the hill that was a little nearer, but we did not intend to be driven an inch out of our way by the creatures, so we went round their way. The moment we appeared, sure enough it was, "My darling, my sweetheart, and my love"—at least I was told so, for I disdained to notice the creatures. But as there was a picture in a window opposite the club-house, and as I was stopping there to look at it, I happened to glance their way, and every man of them had his hand on his heart, and with the most fervid glances smiled and threw kisses, till through horror I was rooted to the spot, and when I looked around all the others were rooted to the spot too, and there we stood till Fräulein Minna came up and drove us on with her umbrella.

Such delicious abandon to a love passage only the German student is capable of. In dreams I still see them—pink cheeks, little white caps, and spectacled blue eyes.

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You climb three hundred steps and then you climb some more, and the summit of the hill is yours. Below you are the red-tiled roofs of Jena, the river, the garden called Paradise, with hills rising one beyond the other, blue and bluer till their lines melt in the violet sky.

The little café where we had coffee stands on the very spot where once sang the guns of Napoleon. There is some satire in this story bleak with tragedy. For the Prussians had not expected the arrival of Napoleon for several days, as the path over the mountain was known only to the Germans themselves. Little anxiety was felt; the people went about their usual work; but that dull roar, what was it? They looked up, and above them on the height was planted the cannon of Napoleon. A German had been found who for love of life gave the fire into the enemy's hand. How would one like to have been inside of that man as, most honorably attended by a French officer, he showed in the night the enemy along the secret path.

And a little later had you been there you would have seen the German peasants lashing

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their straining oxen and horses, burdened with the French cannon, up the steep mountain side to rain down fire and death on their home and kinsfolk.

Are not these two worthy jests to credit to the great Napoleon? One laughs through tears of blood, for out there in the valley men lie with their heads shattered, their blood spilling out into the dirt, and not far away in a little cottage of clay and boards some humble creature with her children catching at her dress is praying with anxious heart that he who lies out there may soon return to his fireside.

Well, the world knows that Napoleon jested with big guns and he had the laugh on the world, till one day the Russian winds and cold and snow got the laugh on him, and then we hear of these same peasants feeding the wretched French soldiers on that awful, that wild march back to France.

So they played their part, peasant and emperor, soldier and shop-keeper, and the women in cottage and mansion who bore their children, spun for them, baked for them, laughed and

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wept for them. And what was it all for, and who cares? Was there a hand using these creatures? Their petty fears and ambitions, were these but tools through which they were taken hold of and a fragment of some design wrought out? And for them was never given to know for what they worked nor why.

Assuredly there is some hidden good in all this mystery. Destiny, which imprisons us, still lets fall through its closed shutters some little light. We see those who have been, and a glimpse comes of those who shall be — and we are linked with them. Time has moved on millions of ages to give us a place. There is a hand which pulls the wires, we perform our tricks and the curtain drops.

* * *

We look down and see that the lamps begin to twinkle along the streets, and they glimmer too on the dark gallows hill above the town where a hundred years ago they led out Jena's condemned to die, and on the Garden of Paradise falling asleep in the dusk. Sleeping too is that little garden where once Goethe and

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Schiller walked and talked. The light is gone. One can no longer see the beautiful bust of Schiller beneath the trees, nor read Goethe's inscription on the stone beneath—"Here we have walked together and many great and beautiful words have spoken."



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Padua

I can never forget Padua, probably because when there I did not see it. We had traveled all the morning, passing through fields green with the warm moisture of spring. Along their edges were rows of small trees, with grape-vines trained to them and hanging in festoons like a Pompeian frieze. How blue the sky was that day! The whitewashed cottages of the peasants gleamed dazzling white against it. Out of the moss on their steep roofs, violets and white anemones were growing. I remember there was a little canal running through the fields, bordered by young willows and little silver birch trees. Its waters were so still, glazed like the eyes of a sleeping child to whom has come no thought of death or dream of love.

Beyond the meadows I saw a tower and a silver dome, like the inverted cup of a lily,

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floating in the blue of the sky. It was Padua. We drew into the station. It was a hot sunshiny afternoon about two o'clock; no one got out of the train and no one got in. The station was deserted. In the stillness we could hear the flies buzzing against the windows of our compartment. A little German Jew slept in one corner with a sandwich of black bread in his hand. Two American girls spoke drowsily of having "done" Florence in two days, and then overcome with the heat fell back dozing in their seats.

I opened the door, and slipping out I walked to the end of the platform. The station, the fields, the white houses, all slept in the hot sunshine. There was no sign of life—only the sound of the buzzing of the flies against the windows of the station.

I walked on until I came to a long street that lay, white with dust and quite still in the sunshine. Bordering it on each side were rows of dusty poplar trees.

Away beyond there might have been steep roofs and domes. I thought I saw the gleaming of their walls, and again I thought it but a

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delusion of the sunlight. I rubbed my eyes. It seemed to me like the street that leads into the City of Sleep.

Once, in a dream, I had seen just such a long white street—and yet it was not the same; I looked vaguely about to find something missing, and when I found it, it came over me like something long since familiar, but slipped a moment from the mind.

* * *

What I see is a young girl standing at one side of the road under a poplar tree. She has just taken from her head a great bundle of brush. It lies at the side of the road. She leans listlessly against the trunk of a tree. Her bare feet are gray with dust. Her short cotton skirt shows her legs and ankles, the strong ankles of one who will carry burdens to the grave. She has on a yellow-and-blue apron and around her neck is a magenta colored handkerchief. Her face is brown as dirt; her large eyes look into mine, mutely questioning. About her is the absolute repose of the toiler at rest. Inert and passive she leans there,

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the cords of her young neck standing out in the strong light like the strings of a violin.

My thoughts swing backward and forward. Padua is forgotten for I am in a little chamber beyond the sea. How sweet rises to me the breath of the syringa blossoms outside the window!

Still in the night lies the village street climbing slowly the hill, and the moon is shining there and shining down on the grassy graves, and I am dreaming, dreaming of a white street with the flash of a dome in the distance against a sky, blue as are only the skies of dreams.

There is a girl standing by the side of the road. . . .

* * *

The learned doctors of Padua sleep, and sleeping too are its white streets.

Still the girl stands there looking into space with mutely questioning eyes.

I give one backward glance. The girl's face looks at me with mysterious meaning — the meaning of that mystery which is the arrest of

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the hidden permanence in the vanishing and disappearing.

I go back and creep softly into my compartment. Quite still is the station — there is only the sound of the flies buzzing against the windows.



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Utrecht

On my way to Rotterdam I found I must wait over an hour at Utrecht. The station faces the town with a terrace of shallow marble steps and out here at a little table I had lunch.

It was a perfect night. One heard faintly the kling-klang of the horse-cars, and over the tree tops rose the cathedral tower. A full moon shone in the sky and the night air was fragrant with the blossoms of the linden trees.

Next to me an artist sketched the cathedral tower; beyond him was an old man reading a book.

Never did there exist, I decided as I looked him over, a more perfect Old-Dutch type. He might have been painted by Jan Steen himself. He had on a curious top-hat and a wide-skirted coat that flared out from the waist. His face was bronzed and he had those uncanny leering eyes the Dutch painters have transfixed

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to canvas to unpleasantly haunt our dreams when we have eaten a late supper.

What a fine old type, I thought, and got out my note-book.

At that moment he spoke up. "It's going to be a fine day tomorrow," he said in excellent English.

On closer scrutiny the book he was reading turned out to be Baedeker. I went over to borrow it and found they were two Englishmen out for a holiday.

The artist spoke enthusiastically of Utrecht.

"Stay here by all means, there's a good deal to be seen. Don't go to Rotterdam, it's dull."

And so I stayed.

* * *

Utrecht, one of the oldest towns of the Netherlands, dates back to the beginning of the Christian era; so the guide-book says, and where the guide-book's statements are on the side of the picturesque I stand by the guide-book.

The guide-book also says it is situated on the

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rivers Vecht and Oude, and this I verified, for I went out myself and looked up these two streams.

Its canals and streams sleep beneath a forest of old trees, and walking there in the early morning one may meet old citizens in knee-breeches set off with silver buckles. With the manner of French courtiers they promenade there, with peasants in wooden shoes, barge-men with gold hoops in their ears, and old dames in snowy caps.

The cathedral with its crumbling Gothic arches is picturesque and beautiful, but the interior has been spoiled. One has some tender fancies for the early structure before alien ideas had crept in to modify the quaint Dutch "plainness," but it has been destroyed and rebuilt and restored until nothing remains of the original.

The tower stands alone, there being a passageway through it for the horse-cars.

Long ago the tower was left standing alone by a terrible storm, which destroyed the rest of the cathedral; two hundred and fifty years ago, I believe, though I am not certain. The

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guide-book is a little misty on this point, but anyhow there stands the gray tower looking down on the horse-car and the modern innovations of Utrecht with the air of one who knows that these, too, are but transitions, a movement of that tide which leaves here and there a crumbling stone to tell of the ebb and flood of the years.

One can go up into the tower, but I was wise and did not. Instead I took the steamboat and went to Maarsen, a crowd of small boys in wooden shoes gathering to see me off. These shoes with their slightly turned up toes became the young Hollanders' lack of beauty immensely, and I noticed as these younglings reposed in pastoral ease on the bank that the soles of several of them sadly needed repairing.

Our captain was adorned with an enormous gold hoop in one ear and oily yellow curls which fell to his shoulders. It is true he was otherwise garbed, but it was in the mediocre fashion of modern custom and aroused no interest. On his steamboat he serves one with first and second class; first class you sit

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on a leather cushion ten inches square, and second class—you don't.

Meadows and meadows, and black and white cattle asleep under the trees, with an occasional cottage crouching on the edge of a little canal whose waters are green with age, an endless procession—this scene passed us till we came to Maarsen.

Maarsen, I am convinced, is the most uninteresting village of all Europe. I am willing to offer a prize for a more uninteresting village, but in my belief Maarsen heads the list.

There is a garden off one side of the village, and I wandered over there for some tea. I made the waiter understand that I wanted tea, but when it came to cake, that was a different matter. I tried him in French, I tried him in German, I tried him in Italian, and had I known Hebrew I should have tried him in that. For the first time in my life I regretted not having learned Hebrew. At last that waiter had an inspiration; with an air of triumph he drew out a pencil and paper. I also was jubilant. In my best manner I sketched a beautiful

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cake with icing on it. He smiled, bowed, went off gayly, and in about fifteen minutes returned with an omelette.

I wandered back to the boat-landing to find that I was an hour and a half too early.

An old man who was washing out a whole shopful of bottles, called me gracious lady in German and invited me to sit down on a bench by the shopdoor; and I did so, wondering as I watched the old Hollander splashing about with his stone bottles if he intended to drain the canal.

The water was fetched for him by a boy who carried it in two pails slung to a wooden yoke he carried on his shoulders. In Ilzburg in the Harz they still carry water in this primitive way, and I remember one old girl who used to go by every morning yoked to her pails who never failed to call out to me in her deep voice, *Tag*.

The bench was in the sun and I felt myself overcome with drowsiness. The splashing of water on the stone bottles sounded farther away. I must have dozed, for it seemed to me I was wandering once more through the beech

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woods of Ilsenburg, listening to the wind singing through the lonely aisles. Into the depth I wandered and heard no sound save the whispering of the trembling leaves. As it grew darker a laugh seemed to spring out of the dusk, and though on the open no sunlight shone, within a green mist-like light gleamed from the trees themselves, as though they were lighted with innumerable misty eyes. The tree trunks darkened into violet, the leafy boughs faded into twilightish vapor and strange shadows waved across the stagnant pools. Then the wood gave out one long, sighing, tremulous tone; the sadness of the shadow of night which had drawn all into the common pitch.

Yes, I must have dozed, for I was awakened by the old Hollander who touched my hand with his wet fingers. "Gracious lady, the steamboat for Utrecht is at the landing." I thrust a copper into his hand and hurried away, the boy with the wooden pails dangling against his legs watching me out of sight.

I wonder if my old man still washes his stone bottles in the Dutch village of Maarsen.

I had dinner in the garden and a little

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later I slowly wandered over to the Maliebaan.

In the unlit shadowy spaces beneath the old trees promenaded lovers with their arms intertwined, gayly-dressed children, peasants in wooden shoes, stout citizens and bare-armed old women in snowy caps and the gold head-pieces of the Friesians. In that illusory atmosphere of the hour after sunset, what a picture made those quaint costumes under the fragrant antique trees! The foreground was golden and the figures moving there were for an instant soaked in orange light, then the shadowy perspective drank them up—shadowy save where shot through with vivid color as a gay figure flared out to vanish the next instant into the dusk.

“All the world’s a stage,” and these shifting scenes, an instant caught on that delicate film behind the eye, shall remain when the fantasy of the moment is acted out.

The scene and actors may vanish but the picture remains, of this one and that one in gay apparel, with fresh and joyous mien, when the rich clothes have been doffed and laid away in drawers and the faces sharpened by

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life's stress and woe, or even fallen to dust. Upon how many a flitting eye the picture falls! And as for me, how many images of me are hidden away in far-off consciousness which Death shall crack and erase as he turns the light out on that stage where for an instant, oblivious of myself, I have played some momentary part! "It were too curiously to consider;" but the day was waning. I saw the lights of the Kirmess and went home by booths blazing with lamps and beating with the noise of horns and drums. Before their doors dancers and jugglers in tinsel gauze and pink tights invited one to enter with smiling painted lips.

Before one booth an athlete in pink tights, which in the dim light made his great figure look stript naked, stood with one mighty arm folded over his breast; the other, but a withered stump, dangled from his shoulder. As his melancholy eyes looked down on the moving faces he seemed like a maimed lion, half dying yet unconquered.

The crowd thickened; the merry-go-rounds flew faster; the colors of this kaleidoscope

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moved endlessly back and forth. Flying circles of blazing color, pierced through with screams of laughter, whirling faces, streaming hair and ribbons, mixed up with snatches of barbaric music — this is the picture in my mind of Utrecht's Kirmess; this, and the face of a huge Hollander with cold eyes who followed me stealthily from booth to booth. I became uneasy, it was only a quick flight over a bridge, down a narrow street, and I was on the lighted avenue; the next instant I was safe in my room in the hotel.

I did not sleep that night in Utrecht. All night long I heard the cathedral chimes playing, those bells of bronze and silver and gold; in the still of the night they played on, and I lying in my bed thought of the long dusky Maliebaan, and how beneath its shadowy arches the night winds moved the perfumed branches, and the dust of fragrant flowers fell there, lightly, all the night long.

And the canals, I saw them sleeping in the moonlight, and I was wandering there where silent, with their colored lamps darkened, lay many a dark barge.

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Within them slept, too, an invisible life. Bronzed men with their great arms flung over their heads, their bearded lips half open; tired women with tangled hair and bent shoulders; children with gay quilts thrown over their dimpled limbs.

The waters of the canal slept so still in the moonlight; under the arches of their bridges, under carved gables of old houses, and where the trees hang over their edges.

By flower farms whose brilliant colors waited for the dawn to call them to life.

And like a flower, with all the colors of your dreams sleeping in your folded soul, so you, wrapt in night, slept till the dark rim of the earth goblet had drunk up the Pleiades, and Venus and the dawn rose on the east; the barges woke to life, the carts rattled over the stony streets. And you, as the light crept between your closed eyelids, did something stir within you, faint as the odor from a rose trodden under foot? a remembrance of one who, far away, lay through the long watches of the night and thought on you—oh, forgetting one, forgetting one!

A Chopin Nocturne

In the Scheibenholtz *

In the early morning the Scheibenholtz is the children's garden. This morning I sat with the nurse-girls on a bench at one side of a circular playground, watching the games.

It was cool and fair; the green leaves shivered and trembled in the light wind, and the sunlight sifting through bathed us in its soft glow. Through the arches of the trees we saw a low green meadow with an avenue of stately poplar trees beyond it. Above, shone misty blue the great arch of the sky, and beyond the road was the river reflecting the blue sky and the blowing leaves and blossoms of the fruit trees along its edge.

A moment it snared on its glassy surface the zigzag flight of a butterfly, then a bird's swift passing; so transient and swift its impressions; and tonight its life has died out

* A wood near the city of Leipsic.

and Other Sketches

and only the mystery of darkness rests upon its bosom.

“Like the passing of the human soul is this river.”

Near me a child was making a little garden, building up a mound of dirt on which he planted bits of twigs to represent trees. Some were hung with green leaves, while others hung lifeless and dead. In this garden life and death met. The child ran back and forth pulling the grass which he scattered over the mound till his garden had a green cover; then he began building about it a little wall of stone.

Near him a tiny girl paraded up and down, holding by the hand her doll whose red morocco shoes dragged on the ground. Suddenly it slipped from her hand and fell face downward in the dirt. The little girl with an angry air picked up the doll and brushed off its white dress; then more angrily still she shook it and whipped it violently on its back.

The sound of bird wing in the air and their endless twittering to each other, called them a moment from their play. They stood with

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upraised innocent eyes, staring into the clouds like miniatures of the early saints.

Light and shadow chased across the graveled walks and the trees swayed in the wind; and as the wind blew the blossoming trees by the river, their petals floated lightly to the ground, and in the glass of the river they fell too, softly, softly, like little dreams of blossoms, passing too swiftly o'er this one, so deeply sleeping.

An old peasant woman came up to the bench leading a child by each hand. They tottered along, their weak legs bent half double, staring stupidly about with glazed eyes. The old *grossmutter* lifted them on to the bench and they sat there, staring vacantly at those children who, dressed in white with soft merino jackets, were running gayly about the wood.

How gay they were, those children! They built and dug and rolled about great painted balls through the cool green wood. For them to live was happiness. Suddenly we heard the sound of trampling feet, and looking up, saw a little procession passing through the wood.

A stout man came first, alone, and behind

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him two by two came a band of children. They were children of a charity school. The little girls, dressed alike in clumsy woolen dresses, marched first. The other children drew out of their way, pausing from their play to stare curiously after them, but the charity children only looked straight ahead. If the flowers and trees called to them, they heard louder in their ears the rhythm of that march they kept step to.

The little boys came behind, dressed in a kind of uniform which made them distinct from other children—a belted jacket of gray cloth and long shapeless woolen trousers.

In the regular march of these children through the riotous garlanded wood there was something foreshadowing the years. Already their eyes had the angle downward; young as they were they felt the overwhelming impetus of a destiny which had set them apart from others and bound them together in loneliness.

Behind all the rest walked a tiny boy dressed in the uniform, and against his coarse gray jacket he held to his breast a little red book. He looked straight ahead, his feet kept beat

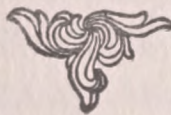
A Chopin Nocturne

to the rhythm of the others, nor did he seem to notice the gay children, the green fields and verdure. Though the glance of this tiny atom destiny had stricken downward, his heart, I thought, felt the pressure of the little red book he held always against his breast.

* * *

And the wood was fresh and cool; gayly the children played there, laughing as they rolled their balls about.

And beyond was the river, reflecting the sky and the blowing petals of the white blossoms which fell softly, softly, like dreams, passing so swiftly over this one, too deeply sleeping.



and Other Sketches

Delft

When I looked out of the station at Rotterdam, my first thought was that the town had made a mistake and walked into the water. It was a "blue" day, the sunlight was brilliant, and I had a confused sense of a shining sea, a tangle of boat spars, and heavily corniced brick buildings.

A Hollander who spoke English with the "Parisian accent" directed me to the post-office by means of the bridges, a manner which seems the fashion there.

He said, "Go three bridges straight ahead, turn to the left one bridge, and just beyond you'll see a green bridge; turn this side of that, and cross four white bridges and there, on the right, beyond an iron bridge is the post-office."

I found it without difficulty, took a horse-car

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which jingled along with that tranquil indifference to the flight of time one notices in Holland, and arrived at the station just in time to miss the train for Delft. This gave me a half-hour to drink a cup of tea; I sat down at a little table and ordered tea and cheese.

In Holland everybody orders cheese, and though there are moments when enthusiasm dies out of the cheese habit, a sense of duty keeps one at it. Next to me two pretty girls read novels and nibbled their cheese and a Dutch cake of sweet bread and citron; this cake I was to learn to know better later on. I ate one on my arrival in Delft and it cast a gloom over my entire visit.

I had just reached the bottom of my cup when a jargon of horrible sounds fell on my ear; it was an official calling out the train for Delft. I hurried out, was locked in a second-class compartment, and was soon flying (one uses the word in its Dutch sense) across the country.

Some dream of the land of Padua haunted these moist green fields; but instead of vines, garlanded from young trees, one discovered

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windmills, always windmills, like great round pillars of stone, supporting colossal wings, which beat the air into rhythmic chanting.

Sometimes at the water's edge crouched a cottage whose tiled roof rose out of the sleeping water like a dusky lotus, while moored by the door some old rotting barge lay, like a picture of sleep.

The ancient servitor of a noted inn met me at the station. It was five o'clock in the afternoon and the town slept. The sound of wooden shoes on the pavement sounded in my ear like the rocking of a cradle. I wondered that the Delfite got out of bed at all, and I doubt if he would, if it were not for the Delft mosquito.

In the shop windows were the same photographs of Wilhelmine, the same silver ornaments and coral necklaces one sees in other Dutch towns; yet no one passed in or out of the shopdoors standing wide open the shadow of the green boughs on their floors. It was like an enchanted city.

The drowsy stillness stole over my senses. I saw the place as one sees a face in a dream.

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Fresh and clear it remains in my memory: a long clean street where the ancient servitor and I took our way, in the cool shadow of green trees whose branches fell over the glistening water, over white bridges, which in the dusk of the green boughs gleamed white with the pallor of unstained marble.

My inn was on the market-square, with the cathedral at one end and the townhouse at the other. A spiral staircase more like a ladder than anything else led up to my room, and here I was served with the bountiful Dutch fare by the ancient servitor, with an appearance of distrust and Louis XVI.'s coat-tails.

The window of this room framed for me many a picture of Delft life — pictures where faces appeared and vanished in scenes that melted into each other, till tower and street and palace dissolved into clouds and the mind saw the world, a pageant of flying shadows.

In the afterglow of the northern day, when at nine o'clock spires and walls glistened with golden light, I used to sit by this window looking down on the market-square. Two streets

and Other Sketches

beyond rose the roof of the palace where the Prince of Orange met his death. I looked up and down the quaint street and thought that once on a time William the Silent passed in and out of these doorways. A plain enough house it is, yet it sheltered one who used himself for a lever to lift the world, and pilgrims from over the seas visit it as a shrine; "pilgrims," one says, and worthy are they to bear the name, though many are inscribed on the guest-book as "Smith," and hail from Dubuque and Michigan City.

On the stairway they show you that most substantial of relics, a hole—the hole made by the bullet of the assassin who shot the great prince as he came down the stairs. They will show you his table and chair, and when you have worked up the proper enthusiasm, they will tell you, "These are models; the real are in Amsterdam." Here are also several portraits of him and a statue.

All have that peculiar expression of the eyes, the glance turned in, as though their light burned there. The face shows repose, it is silent as one listening, listening to something

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within. William, well called "The Silent," Prince of Orange, basely assassinated in the year of our Lord 1584 for the price set on his head: so departed a great figure by way of this Delft stairway.

* * *

The people clatter over the wooden bridges and the picture fades. The lights are beginning to twinkle in the little shops around the square.

In the doorway of one of them a young girl stands. Behind her on wall and easel hang old porcelain jugs and pitchers, plates of red and blue and brown, and those beautiful tiles where shepherds tend their flocks under a sky soft as sleep. Through the hazy air they wander on, where verdure and figure, blending into a soft monochrome, seem to unite all in the earth dream, sheep and shepherd, tree and cloud — all a fantasy, a dream out of the heart of the world.

Two doors beyond the girl a young Dutch "gallant" stands staring listlessly at the cathedral. Apparently these two are absorbed in

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the music of the cathedral chimes which ring out clear and sweet an old melody of other times and men and women, dust and ashes now and blown about old churchyards. Suddenly their glances leave the tower and sink to the earth like falling stars; those glances meet. So "romance" is written.

The lights begin to swarm over the bridges and up and down the canal like fireflies. The sound that rises from the street is the softened murmur of pleasure. In the morning all the women will be out in wooden shoes scrubbing off their doorsteps, that spotless is Delft kept; but tonight they keep festival with the bravest, in beautiful lace caps, starched skirts, and coral necklaces.

What was it, I wonder drowsily, that the Delft artist told me yesterday as we sat in the little garden off the square? Above the trees rose the gray walls of towers, and down a narrow street one tiny cottage after another sat close to the water's edge, with boxes of flowering shrubs in the windows.

"In twenty years from now there will be nothing to interest the artist in Holland," the

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artist had said to me, staring gloomily over at the shops where picture post-cards jostled out of sight the beautiful silver filigree ornaments of old Holland.

Surely the charm is on it now. People and landscape fit each other, and naturally, since the Dutch have made their own landscape. Some of the peasant girls, ruddy as apples, with reddish gold hair falling in tangled curling locks around their sunflushed faces are like pictures. Those great shoulders and hips that look as though they must burst through their laced bodices and petticoats, the stout feet and ankles, the ample chests and bosoms, have the life in them of the great wind-swept meadows; of the long pull at the heavy moving barges, milking of cows out of doors in sun and rain, and haying in the orange noon of Holland and in the great lonesome star-lighted blue nights.

Harvest work out of doors, warm blood and simple content, leisure enough for rollicking and holidaying, this life is what paints for one the strong northern color,—the pictures of Franz Hals, Rembrandt, and old Jan Steen.

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The lights flicker and go out, and so the picture fades. The bells in the cathedral tower strike the hour. I look up at the great arch of the sky, that darkly blue sky which but deepens its color as night comes on, and the wind from out its starry depth blows my thoughts this way and that way.

These, our actors —
were all spirits
and are melted into thin air.
And like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces —

There is a thud outside the door, it is the ancient servitor with my pewter-jug of hot water.

“At what hour will the gracious lady have breakfast?” he questions huskily through the keyhole. “At seven,” I call back. Then I glance at the feather-bed I sleep under these summer nights, whose comfortable depth not even the Delft mosquito can penetrate.

“No, eight,” I call, and lower the window. I hear his footsteps fainter, fainter down the marble steps. A door slams, and the inn is silent and dark.

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A Sunset

It was our first sunset on the Atlantic. We left New York in fog and rain that followed us for four days. The morning of the fifth day we saw beginning to widen around us the world of the Atlantic.

Just before night the sun, low on the horizon, shone out of the smoky sky, then the great disc sunk below the sea. From the point of its disappearance shot up a scarlet fire, growing slowly until it covered the sky. There was something ominous in its gloomy splendor. The sea was sullen and dark, and over it stretched the scarlet sky like a great tent.

Silent and lifeless lay this world, from which no thought of mine sent into its depth returned to me again.

Hearing some kind of music, I leaned over

and Other Sketches

the rail, and looked down into the steerage. Several hundreds of emigrants were standing in groups about a central figure, three young girls, with arms intertwined, slowly dancing to the music of an accordion played by a hunchback. The ends of white scarfs, bound over their heads, floated out around them, long fluttering streamers that took strange motions of their own.

Now I saw their thin white faces raised to mine, like stars in the dusk, then they disappeared and I saw only dark whirling skirts and the white streamers, like wings over their heads.

What a strange picture, the lonesome sea, the scarlet sky, and those groups of emigrants with their dark, saturnine faces. No one smiled. The hunchback looked vaguely at his instrument, seeming with fatalistic sadness to acquiesce in the incongruity between himself and its gayety.

The girls whirled slowly round and round, and as the dusk deepened they became a strange cloudlike apparition, from which the eyes of one and then of another looked out

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from a whirling white face. Those eyes slept in slumbrous fire. It was as though their souls stood still watching.

Like figures carved out of stone the groups about them never moved, some with their arms over each other's shoulders, others leaning listlessly against each other like animals herded together. Not a lifetime but generations of toil was branded into those dwarfed figures as though by fire.

Near me, looking down on the dancing girls in the steerage, sat a young girl. The beauty of her proud disdainful face was faultless. Beside her stood her French maid, holding on her arm a cloak lined with a beautiful pale fur.

Just behind me, in a room off the stairway, two men were playing cards, and while a little heap of coin was at the elbow of one of them, the other lost nonchalantly, laughing as he saw the gold spreading out over the table.

Now as it grew late a strange change took place in the dusk, blending the real into the unreal as imperceptibly as the mist steals through and into the night.

and Other Sketches

That great platform on which we sat, I saw now upon what pillars it rested. Those twisted columns beneath us were human figures. How heavily we pressed down upon their curving shoulders, between which hung their faces, sullen and hopeless. Some of them were crushed double. They looked about with uneasy eyes, twisting and untwisting their knotted fingers as they sought always to shift the burden from their shoulders, which settled slowly lower and lower.

Now the motion of the girls became slower, like butterflies, pierced through and fixed, but fluttering faintly their gauzy wings. And now the great floor closed down upon them. They put up their trembling white fingers, their heads sank and drooped upon their breasts. Slowly they too were being crushed under. Their faces withered like the petals of flowers torn from the stalk. For a moment their sad eyes looked up into the sky and then like the others fell to the earth, never more to be raised again.

And above we sat, I and the beautiful girl and her French maid and the two men playing

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with heaps of yellow gold. The color died out of the sky; and there in the dusk we floated, the upper and lower decks, between a sea and sky which in their unfathomable dusk and shadow reflected ever each other's mystery.



and Other Sketches

A Sunday in Amsterdam

In the early dawn I said goodby to the ancient servitor, feed him as one should feed a man who daily climbs up and down a marble stairway, and joined William in a third-class compartment where he had become entangled with an accordion and a charity school.

The accordion played, the little girls smiled their delight, and as the early sun gilded their round faces and the wind blew fresh from the sea, the mirth of the moment captured them, and one by one their little muslin-capped heads went nodding to the music. In their low-necked black dresses, with short sleeves and knit white undersleeves, as they swayed back and forth they made a picture I see to this day, so sweet it was.

The breeze blew fresher, the canals thickened, and suddenly the door of our compart-

A Chopin Nocturne

ment was thrown open with a bang. We were in Amsterdam, and following the accordion we found ourselves sauntering beneath the trees, down a long street bordering a canal where lay moored in Sunday calm many a picturesque barge. One understands at last the fascinations this old water town has for the artist, as he walks beneath its carven gables. Many of the houses are painted black with white tracings. These old peaked fronts, heavily corniced, with many-paned windows, leaning at all angles, overhanging perhaps a bit of water,—where are moored two or three old barges which through many varnishings have taken on the color of old mahogany, sporting perhaps an old sail of dull red or yellow,—need just that strip of a Dutch blue sky to discover to one that in this northern life and color sleeps the spirit of the northern art.

Those subtle creations, wrought with a spirit which makes them escape from the canvas, burn today on the walls of the Rijk's Museum—Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, *Cavalier and Lady*, and those great etchings, burnt acid-like out of the husk of life, the vigor of

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one who out of himself wrought lonely wood, and peasant and child, and running stream, and died, and left the mystic sign of his spirit on a hundred or so bits of black and white paper. But a spell is in them, and one who looks becomes little more than the remembrance of a dream of times when cavaliers swept their plumed hats to the floor in the dance, as their ladies' white hands were high lifted, yet always like iron kept finger on the long sharp swords dangling from the silken scarfs at their middle.

* * *

And was it yesterday you crouched under that old doorway whispering to neighbor Van Burgh's daughter, whose silver head ornaments tinkled angrily while she shrilly cursed the Spaniards? Your wooden shoes clattered together as you saw a shadow creep along the wall; but 'twas only William Van Burgh, Katherine's little brother, mending his fishing net. And all the while Katherine hissed with pursed-up lips of Leyden and its slaughter, and suddenly with face close to yours whispered

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softly of the report of a terrible stroke "The Silent Prince" meditated — even the letting in of the sea upon the land. You shivered as you looked up and down the narrow street; there seemed something dark and gloomy about the whole city, something spectral as though it were about to vanish in the eclipse of a dark tragedy.

But all that was long ago; and today though you jostle elbows with Spaniards on the boulevards, they are only sailors of a servilely peaceful time, the glory of an unparalleled ferocity quenched, their mediocrity uncolored save by the diversion of an amiable Sunday-morning drunk.

* * *

We turned down a narrow street paved with cobble stones, so narrow, by stretching out our arms we might have touched both sides, where leaning buildings threatened to topple down on our heads, and have been so threatening for three or four hundred years. There was a hissing as though the geese of the world had been driven into one pasture lot, and we

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were embarked on our voyage down Amsterdam's ghetto.

"There is a slight odor here," said William with mild resentment, "not down in the guide-book. It is in these little things that the guide-book fails. Along here, somewhere lived old Spinoza—be careful, don't step on the babies, and look out for pickpockets and peddlers—yes, old Spinoza lived here—but what an odor!" And so we pushed on through the shrieking, gesticulating, wheedling crowd. Thousands were swarming up and down the narrow streets, hawking, heaven knows what not. Strawberries in measures of braided ozier rods, necklaces of glass beads, lace, fish, cabbage, bits of tinsel, for this sharp-eyed people flaunt their gold with the best. And as we passed some prophet-like figure with sunken tragic eyes, a lifetime pent in by the stones of this street, a bevy of Jewesses in gay silks and gold ornaments bore down upon us, fingering with white-gloved fingers the gold rims of their eye-glasses. And everywhere swarms of olive-skinned children, rolling under foot, peeping out of doorways and packed

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on street and sidewalk. This press, hissing with vitality, this masque of life hid beneath the grotesquerie of its grin a sinister and tragic aspect. If civilization is a muzzle, this people have theirs screwed on a little tighter than the rest of us, but the difference is of degree. Our brother of the ghetto has been sharpened by the stones of his narrow streets.

We stopped a moment in a doorway to watch the crowd. Portly Jewesses, with none of your little prejudices to dirt, baked in iron stoves set by their doorways cakes of meal, which they sold to the small boy who, in ornamented trousers, discussed their merits, in a voice which might have been heard a mile, with tiny yellow maidens with golden hoops in their ears. These hoops seemed to prove seductive; for we saw old sailors, brown as bark, with queer shiny blue eyes, picked out in gold leaf to equal the early saints by means of enormous hoops of gold in their ears.

Amsterdam is your true cosmopolitan on a Sunday. In the harbor fly the flags of nations, and on the boulevards the country hobnobs with the town, with dawdling tourists, Portu-

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guese, Jews, and sailors sandwiched between. There were ladies in their carriages, men of fashion, wooden-shoed urchins, buxom girls in tight-laced bodices, and old dames in snowy caps and short sleeves, whose withered arms resembled more a war map than the skin human, so many epochs of toil had plowed scars there. Custom kept visible the hideousness of those old arms, and after all there was a kind of fitness in it not unesthetic.

We secured an ancient mariner who spoke the fragments of a half-dozen languages to row us out across the bay; and many a tale of adventure, many a hoary-headed lie he regaled us with, as he spat into the water or into the bottom of the boat as the mood seized him, for he was a "fanciful cuss" as Artemus Ward would say. When I pointed out to him an island and asked him if the fisherwomen lived there, he replied genially, "Yaas—and the fisher-gentlemens too." When we landed he conducted us on an expedition of discovery, leaning against the sides of the buildings and placing one Argus eye against the window-pane in a manner which sometimes elicited

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screams from the inmates of the cottages, who were often discovered in the mysteries of the toilette. Nothing more spotlessly clean than these cottages can be imagined. If you were five and a half feet tall you might cover their area without a yardstick, but usually there is a tiny kitchen stuck on the rear. Muslin curtains, wooden chairs with gay cushions, and old dames sitting by the doorway knitting in snowy caps, old mothers of the sea with none of the fine manners of your great ones who live off the labor of others, yet with a touch of stately dignity, as of those who know their place and their right to it — there's the picture and I love it.

Even though costumes and customs change, one feels in traveling over Holland that these are the people Hals and Rembrandt painted. A people busy in the performance of real things. They felt, those old painters, how near to the side of tragedy jostles the elbow of comedy, and how these things need not the grandiose to express them; that even in the history of the humblest there is a real which unites us to it and makes us part of an invisible

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whole. They knew the balance, too, which gives to humor its true proportions to the serious, and the grotesquerie of life they seldom sink to.

The beauty of the southern Venice, this old water town cannot dispute; for her is the more ethical charm of the north. For in those climates where men fish and trade and build in cold and wet and wind one half the year, mere existence too often wears a terrible and sad aspect; sad necessity chastens and beauty is the seldom guest. Such a people look beneath the dark face of life to read the hidden meaning. So it is that a northern people are more ethical than a southern, and their art, though grand, is often austere, their mirth tinged with irony.

So in the end one comes back, not to the art of one people but of the world. As one sees in some cathedral mixed with the purest form and ornamentation some vulgar and obscene sign, the grotesque and the beautiful in confused juxtaposition, so one learns a reverence for those who wrought, who seized upon the mean and vulgar and worked them into a

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symbol to spell out their part of the message of a great edifice so typical of life. Indeed a symbol—of the struggle of form against form, of beauty, chastity, obscenity, and death; which seems, too, to hint of something that remains after stained glass and carven tomb are dust.

* * *

As we get out into the meadows, we look back on the town. The setting sun, gilding its spires and walls, turns them into flame; and voices seem to call out of them a history of times when the daring of their merchants covered the sea with their fleets, of great soldiers and statesmen, of noble painters, cavaliers, and grand dames.

But distance creeps between like a mist, the noble city has vanished, and up from the meadows and marshes creeps the shadow of night.



and Other Sketches

The Home-Coming

And so we came home across the meadows when the sun was sinking low, its long beams raking the level land. And we could see down little side canals where trees and bushes hugged the water's edge, and the gardens bloomed in flower patches of red and blue and yellow, with a thatched cottage set in their midst, and moored by the door some old rotting barge.

The rushes along the canals trembled as a wind sprang up whispering of the night, and as the sun went down a mist rose stealthily like the breath of one dying caught on a looking-glass, till we saw only the windmills looming up like giants and throwing out their great shadowy arms toward us. And the mist grew into a pale vapor that shrouded everything. Mist and mist, with the sun gone and

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the earth drunk up. Sometimes in the stillness we would suddenly hear voices, then the dark side of a barge would slip out of the vapor to vanish the next instant into the night.

We got into Rotterdam at nine o'clock and went to a café where a waiter answered our French in English and a barrel-organ turned out *Daisy*, and *After the Ball*. Then we took a walk along the canal and saw another city than Rotterdam — a great river of glittering water where slept innumerable barges and ships, their masts like slender needles against the blue of the sky; and that sky (for the night had cleared) so blue, as though the dust of millions of blue flowers had been blown into the air and were floating there.

Rotterdam swam in light; the arches of her bridges glistened against the sky and boats and barges were on fire with different-colored lamps that swarmed over the canals like fireflies.

And we saw the moon, silver and pale, and against it as though sharply etched into it were the spars of ships. That same moon we had seen shining down on Venice's Grand Canal when we heard the soft lap-lap of the

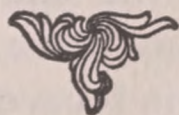
and Other Sketches

gondolier's oar and heard whispers and low laughter and a sigh,—oh, sad as though from a breaking heart,—yet saw no one; we were alone and the tide was pulling at the breast of our boat to carry us out to sea. And the moon shone down, and I saw its light as through tears, the prescience of a coming sorrow whose shadow crept between me and the silver light.

* * *

But that was long ago and these are the lights of Rotterdam; and I might travel many a day but never should I find again that Venetian spring night, lighted with its splendid star.

Never again; for between me and the silver light the shadow has deepened and the light is out.



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Epilogue

The tall girl laid down the manuscript. The light from the court, golden at this last hour of the sun, sifted through the window, lighting up the walls covered with photographs and sketches by Klinger and Sasche Schneider; it sank lower till it fell on the dark heads of the two girls half buried in the cushions of the lounge.

The singer raised herself on her elbow. "All her old towns seem falling asleep."

"Every person looking into the lighted world sees a different picture. The world without may remain the same, but the essence of being whose transfusion with the visible creates the picture, is forever varying."

"Well," said the pianist, yawning slightly, "I consider she ends badly, for she began with the world and ends in a Dutch café."

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The singer sank back on her cushions. "In this I hold with her, for all of life is in that sentence. We have hardly begun before we end, and we begin by promising too much and end by performing too little, and are glad to cover ourselves in that oblivion it has been our passionate effort to escape from."

The violinist opened a desk and laid the manuscript in it. From the apartments next to them sounded the notes of a French horn.

Mein liebe Schwan, hummed the singer in sweet tones.

"After all," mused the pianist, "how little one sees and learns, who merely walks up and down old streets, of the life hidden away under gilded domes and towers, the invisible joy and trouble of the world!"

The violinist shook her head. "They too are symbols of joy and trouble, though we misunderstand them. For these old streets can tell a story of things wrought out to a conclusion beyond the moment either of joy or sorrow into that which, beneath the vanishing and disappearing, remains, the essence of an eternal idealism."

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"In other words—art," said the pianist, and smiled.

They lifted the curtain to catch the last gleam of daylight. From the court came the sound of children's voices blending with the notes of the French horn which played softly, *Mein liebe Schwan, mein liebe Schwan*.

The glow which glistened on the ceiling sank lower; it touched the crumpled rose leaves on the lid of the piano, and on the white plaster casts of the musicians it fell as though before them were placed burning tapers.

Even when it darkened, they still shone out—Schumann's beautiful, weary face, and Beethoven with a sad and bitter smile, looking down on the little room with its litter of books and music, and on the three girls watching in silence for the first appearance of the stars above the house roofs.

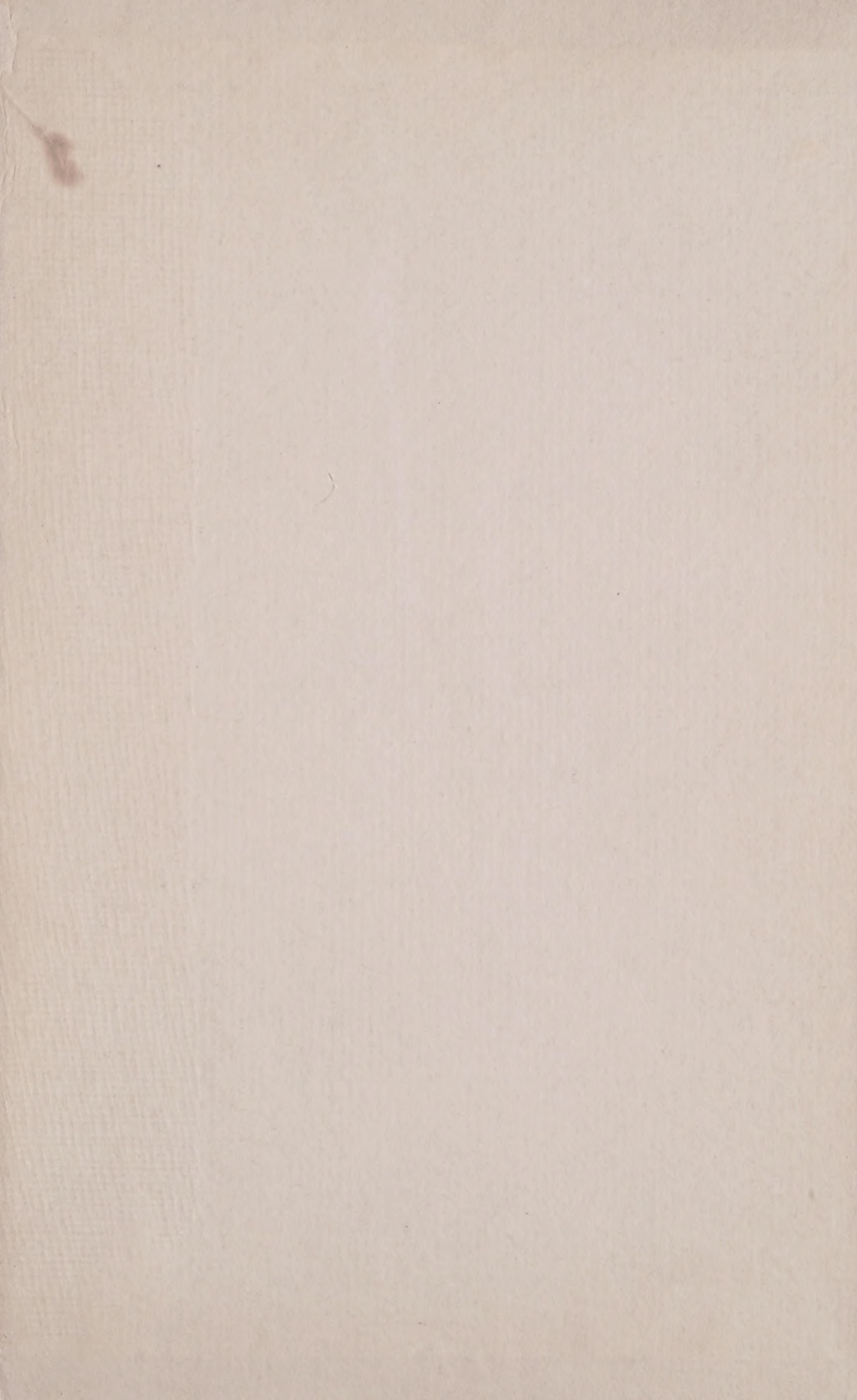


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Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process
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